

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

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SUBJECT: ROK REACTION TO VIET-NAM DEVELOPMENTS

1. EVENTS IN VIET-NAM ARE RECEIVING MAJOR COVERAGE IN ROK PRESS. EDITORIALS, IN ADDITION TO EXPRESSING SYMPATHY FOR "OUR FORMER COMRADES-IN-ARMS" IN VIET-NAM, HAVE LINKED SITUATION THERE TO MIDDLE EAST AND CAMBODIA AS BASIS FOR GROWING PESSIMISM ABOUT ABILITY OF US DIPLOMACY TO PREVENT FURTHER EROSION OF POSITION OF AMERICA'S FRIENDS AND ALLIES.

2. COMMENTING ON INDOCHINA SITUATION MARCH 22, GOVERNMENT ENGLISH LANGUAGE KOREA HERALD EXPRESSED CONCERN AT "GROWING MOOD OF THINKING ON CAPITOL HILL THAT THE AMERICAN COMMITMENT ABROAD IS INDIVISIBLE AND ITS APPLICATION . . . MAY BE TWISTED . . . WITHOUT TANGIBLY AFFECTING THE AMERICAN CREDIBILITY ON A GLOBAL SCALE. AS WORLD PEACE IS NOT DIVISIBLE, NEITHER IS THE US COMMITMENT ABROAD . . ." HERALD MARCH 25 SAID THAT US REDUCTION OF ITS RESPONSIBILITY AS SUPERPOWER IN DISPROPORTION TO THAT OF PRC AND USSR, WHO STILL AID NORTH VIETNAMESE, WILL ONLY ENCOURAGE MORE WARS IN MORE PARTS OF THE WORLD AND WILL COST THE U.S. MORE IN THE LONG RUN.

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3. FEAR THAT US IS LEAVING FIELD TO COMMUNIST POWERS IS HEIGHTENED BY BELIEF THAT COMMUNISTS ARE ACTING IN CONCERT. KOREA TIMES WROTE MARCH 26 THAT "THE SHADOW OF COMMUNIST CHINA IS, OF COURSE, BEHIND THE SCENES OF THE INDOCHINA TRAGEDIES, AND IN THIS REGARD THE 'COMMON PACE' OF PEKING, HANOI AND PYONGYANG COULD NOT BE LESS CALCULATED." IN THIS CONNECTION PRESS SEES COMMUNIST INSURGENT ACTIVITIES IN THAILAND AS LENDING CREDENCE TO DOMINO THEORY.

4. VIET-NAM THEME IS ALSO INCLUDED IN SPATE OF EDITORIAL COMMENTS ON DMZ TUNNELS, WHICH PRESS VIEWS AS INDICATING NORTH KOREAN INTENTION TO INVADE SOUTH. OFFICIAL SEOUL SHINMUN SAID MARCH 22 THAT "WE CANNOT UNDERESTIMATE THE MALICIOUS SCHEME OF THE NORTH KOREAN COMMUNISTS TO UNIFY THE DIVIDED NATION UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES. IT MAY BE A GOOD LESSON TO US THAT THE VIETNAMESE COMMUNISTS INTENTIONALLY CARRIED ON WAR AGAINST SOUTH VIETNAM IN FULL ANTICIPATION OF THE US INVOLVEMENT IN THE WAR." OTHER PAPERS SOUND WARNING THAT ONCE COMMUNISTS CONVINCED US INVOLVEMENT IS AT AN END IN INDOCHINA THEY WILL MOVE EVEN MORE SWIFTLY TO ACHIEVE THEIR GOALS.

5. SIMILAR THEMES HAVE BEEN AIRED IN PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN EMBOFFS AND KOREAN CONTACTS. NDP ASSEMBLYMAN MARCH 26 EMOTIONALLY TOOK US TO TASK FOR LOSING INTEREST IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, POINTING OUT THAT SOUTHEAST ASIA FATE LINKED TO THAT OF KOREA. HIGH RANKING OFFICIAL OF GOVERNMENT CONTROLLED NEWSPAPER MADE ADDITIONAL POINT THAT DETERIORATING SITUATION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA MIGHT PROMPT PRESIDENT PAK TO TAKE FURTHER STEPS TO TIGHTEN CONTROL AT HOME.
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